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The new children's charter

London

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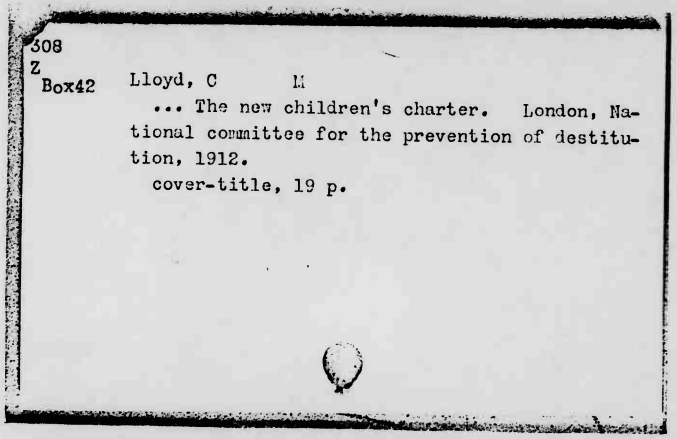

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The National Committee for the Prevention of Destitution.

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THE NEW CHILDREN'S CHARTER

BY

C. M. LLOYD.

PRINTED FOR
THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PREVENTION OF DESTITUTION,
37, NORFOLK STREET, STRAND, LONDON,
1912

Price One Penny.

The National Committee for the Prevention of Destitution.

Office :
37, NORFOLK STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

President :
THE RT. REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM.
Late Chairman of the Central (Unemployed) Body of London.

Treasurer :
MR. T. HAMILTON FOX.

Hon. Secretary :
MRS. SIDNEY WEBB, D.Litt.

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PREVENTION OF DESTITUTION has been formed for the purpose of drawing together all those who (without committing themselves to details) desire to see the existing Poor Law dealt with generally on the lines laid down in the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission. That Report recommended the taking out of the Poor Law of the several classes now dealt with as paupers, and the transfer of the responsibility for these classes to the authorities dealing with the *causes* of destitution—the children to the Local Education Authority, the sick and infirm to the Local Health Authority, the feeble-minded and mentally defective to the Local Lunacy Authority, and the pensionable aged to the Local Pension Authority. These four authorities already exist, as committees of County and County Borough Councils. For all varieties of the able-bodied and unemployed, a new national authority is recommended.

The sole work of the National Committee is the education of public opinion on the question, irrespective of political, religious, or social differences. It includes men and women of the most diverse opinions, who are united only for this one object.

If you are willing to support the National Committee by (*a*) becoming a member without subscribing to the funds, (*b*) becoming a contributing member (amount optional), or (*c*) becoming a subscriber without committing yourself to membership, you are requested to communicate with the Hon. Secretary at the above address.

MS Feb 7-17

The New Children's Charter.

By C. M. LLOYD.

BERNARD SHAW once said, **"There ought to be no such thing as a rich child or poor child—only a happy child."** To-day we are bombarded with reports, statistics, speeches, books, detailing the poverty of hundreds of thousands of our children. A great host of officials and volunteers is daily engaged in investigating, classifying, and providing public meals for "necessitous" children. Medical inspection in 1911 showed that literally millions of elementary scholars were suffering in a more or less serious degree from diseases of the eye, ear, throat, skin, lungs, etc.—a great proportion of these cases being due simply to poverty. There are many thousands of working-class children who have no playground but the gutter, who have never seen the country or the sea, whose "homes" are but squalid dens of misery or of vice. In the streets of all our great towns, or in the garrets of sweated workers, there are countless child labourers, robbed of sleep, play, and education, to produce profits for a greedy commercial age. And under the Poor Law, in the general workhouses or other institutions, or on outdoor relief (this last too often a starvation pittance), we have in England and Wales alone some quarter of a million children—not merely *poor* but *pauper* children.

Now all this is in a certain sense a "parents' question." When we, as a community, have realised the injustice and folly of a condition of society which condemns fathers and

mothers to a lifelong struggle with destitution and unemployment, drives widows with young families dependent on them out into the labour market to earn a sweated wage, and allows—or rather compels—an incredible number of families to live in rackrented slums; and when we have taken drastic steps to ensure to every worker a decent minimum of wages and of health and housing, the problem of the "poor child" will wear a very different aspect. But this does not mean that we ought not to attempt any improvement of the children's conditions apart from their parents' conditions, nor even that any such improvements can only be temporary palliatives. On the contrary, much of what we shall do will hold a permanent place in the State of the future, and—what should be remembered by those who think that it is of little use to try to deal with the child's poverty without dealing with the parents'—it is certain that the bettering of the children's lot will actually help the parents to win better conditions for themselves.

Our task, then, is to establish throughout the land a **minimum of child nurture, a standard of comfort and education, of health and happiness, below which no child shall be allowed to fall.** Before we lay down our practical proposals, let us consider in a little more detail the evil which confronts us.

In our war against poverty we find five giants ever threatening and destroying the children of the poor—Hunger, Disease, Overwork, Ignorance, and Pauperism (or Dishonour). Let us see what havoc they play with childhood.

HUNGER.

It is a perfectly well-known fact—known not only to educationists and Members of Parliament, philanthropists and Labour agitators, but to anyone who chooses to read the newspapers—that there is a vast number of children in this country who never have sufficient food from the day they are born throughout their childhood. The returns of infantile mortality bear grim witness to the ravages made by hunger, assisted by ignorance, disease, and bad housing and industrial conditions, among the babies born in the working-class.

Here are some typical figures:—

INFANTILE DEATH-RATES.

Shoreditch (inhabited by the poor) 170 per 1,000.

Burnley (a working-class town, where married woman are largely employed in the mills), 202 per 1,000.

Birmingham (St. Mary's Ward) (very poor), 331 per 1,000.

Durham County (very bad sanitary and housing conditions) 128 per 1,000.

Carmarthenshire (very bad sanitary and housing conditions) 136 per 1,000.

Hampstead (inhabited mainly by the well-to-do), 78 per 1,000.

Southport (a well-to-do, seaside town), 104 per 1,000.

Bournville (Garden Suburb of Birmingham), 65 per 1,000.

Hertfordshire (healthy, rural conditions), 63 per 1,000.

Oxfordshire (healthy, rural conditions), 67 per 1,000.

This appalling waste of infant life is no new phenomenon, nor is it confined to a few districts. It is chronic and widespread. It exists, and will exist, wherever poverty and destitution are allowed to continue.

Within the last few years the problem of the **"underfed school children"** has come into prominence. Public Committees and Commissions and private investigations made terrible revelations of the hunger that prevailed in the elementary schools, and in 1906* it was found necessary to empower local Education Authorities to provide meals out of public funds in order that their scholars might not be "debarred by sheer lack of food from taking advantage of the State system of public education." In 1910, 113,084 children received school meals in England and Wales. In Scotland things were no better, to judge by the estimate given by the headmasters of Edinburgh that in the summer of 1909 there were 4,000 necessitous children out of a total of 46,500 in the Board Schools of the city. But these figures, startling as they are, do not tell the whole tale, for many Education Authorities, despite the destitution in their areas, have refused to put the Act into force, and moreover, even where the Act is in force, numbers of children do not get school meals, on

* In Scotland in 1908, by the Education (Scotland) Act.

the ground that they have dinner at home—dinner which on investigation is found to consist regularly of nothing more than tea and bread!

The result of this chronic lack of food goes far beyond mere temporary suffering. **"Defective nutrition,"** says Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, **"stands in the forefront as the most important of all physical defects from which school children suffer."** And it has permanent mental and moral effects of the most disastrous kind. Dr. A. S. Arkle, of Liverpool, reporting on the children in the elementary schools there, noted, among the characters produced by starvation, on the one hand "a sort of acute precocious cleverness" typical of a "class from which the pilferers and small thieves come," and on the other hand, "creatures much more like automata," children in a sort of dreaming condition, "only able to respond to some very definite stimulus." Everyone who knows the inside of a "poor" school will recognise these types— the all too common products of hunger.

DISEASE.

As regards disease, Sir George Newman observes,* "speaking generally, it may be said that out of 6,000,000 children registered on the books of the Public Elementary Schools of England and Wales, about 10 per cent. suffer from a serious defect in vision, from 3 to 5 per cent. suffer from defective hearing, 1 to 3 per cent. have suppurating ears, 6 to 8 per cent. have adenoids or enlarged tonsils of sufficient degree to obstruct the nose or throat, and thus to require surgical treatment, about 40 per cent. suffer from extensive and injurious decay of the teeth, about 30 to 40 per cent. have unclean heads or bodies, about 1 per cent. suffer from ringworm, 1 per cent. from tuberculosis in readily recognisable form, from 1 to 2 per cent. are afflicted with heart disease, and a considerable percentage of children are suffering from a greater or less degree of malnutrition. **It cannot be doubted that in the aggregate this formidable category of disease and defect means a serious amount of suffering, incapacity, and inefficiency, which at least must greatly limit the opportunity and diminish the capacity of the child to receive and profit by the education which the State provides, and must involve a continual increase in the national burden of sickness and disablement."**

In many areas the percentages of diseased children are appallingly high, and in some—and those often the worst—no proper measures are taken to remedy the defects revealed by the official medical inspection. In the County Borough of Croydon, which is not usually considered a poverty-stricken district, out of 4,355 children examined in 1911, no less than 3,857, or 88 per cent., were found to be suffering from defects. In Bristol the percentage of defective children was 59 per cent., in the county of Northumberland 64 per cent. In the county of Staffordshire 24 per cent. of the boys and 55.8 per cent. of the girls examined had verminous or unclean heads or bodies, while in Warrington no less than 68.7 per cent. of the girls were found to have verminous heads. In Cheltenham, of 2,589 children inspected, 1,065 had defects of the nose or throat, adenoids, etc., and in Exeter the Medical Officer estimated that 6,000 out of the 7,500 elementary scholars in the city required dental treatment!

* Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910. (Cd. 5925) p. 256.

CHILD LABOUR.

In the dark days of the early nineteenth century vast numbers of tiny children were being ground in the industrial machine, sold for 1d. in the market place as weekly slaves, carried off to the mills by cartloads, or performing the work of horses in the coal mines. Since then the public conscience has become more tender, and it is customary to talk as though all child labour were a thing of the past. Many sweeping reforms have been carried, it is true; yet much remains to be done.

In the mills of Yorkshire and Lancashire there are **over 30,000 children between the ages of 12 and 14 working as half-timers**—rising often at 5 o'clock in the morning, to begin work at 6 or 6.30, and then attending school in the afternoon, or going to school in the morning and working in the mill from 1 o'clock to 5 or 6—at a wage which averages about 2s. 6d. for a 26 or 27 hour week.

Outside the textile areas, where the half-time system does not prevail, vast numbers of school children are employed

before and after school hours (and sometimes when they are supposed to be at school) in shops, or as messengers or errand boys and girls, as golf caddies and farm labourers, in domestic drudgery, or in street trading. The Parliamentary Committee of 1903 reported that in England alone (apart from half-timers) there were **200,000 children thus employed as wage-earners, 1,120 of them between the ages of 6 and 7; 4,211 between 7 and 8; 11,207 between 8 and 9; and 22,131 between 9 and 10.**

In 1908, Miss Adler, of the London County Council, and Mrs. Hylton Dale, made an enquiry into wage-earning children at a boys' school in Hoxton, and a girls' school in Bermondsey. They found "15 per cent. of the boys were wage-earners. They were employed as errand boys to take out bottles, parcels, or papers, at a tea shop, at a coal shop, at an upholsterer's, at a barber's. As street sellers they sold laces, salt, pot-herbs, vegetables, blacking." One "picked over green stuff" for a greengrocer; one ran errands for a maker of doll's arms; one looked after a crippled boy; one helped at a whelk and mussel stall; one made capsules; one cardboard boxes; one sticks; whilst one covered steels. At the girls' school some ran errands, some minded neighbours' babies, some sold vegetables in the streets, or helped at coster stalls, some played with neighbours' children, some sold alone in the streets, which is "illegal." And in 1912, we read in a report of the Secretary for Education in Leeds of numbers of appalling cases of boy labour—cases which are unhappily not confined to Leeds—such as that of van-boys, aged 14, employed from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., with no half-holiday; billiard markers, aged 14, employed from 9.30 a.m. to 11 p.m.; errand boys, aged 13, employed from 8.30 a.m. to 9 p.m. (and 11 p.m. on Saturdays); and newspaper shop boys, aged 16, employed from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m.

By what right are all these thousands of children robbed of their childhood, of play, of rest, of physical and mental and often of moral development? By what right do we allow —nay, encourage—boys and girls of 10 to "contribute to the family income"? Is it "good for them"? If so, why do not rich parents dispense with their nurses and governesses and hire their children out to deliver milk or sell evening papers in the streets? Let us get rid of cant, and face the fact that for every one of the "successful business men"

whom we hear of as having started life at 8 years old on 6d. a week, we have thousands of workmen whose health has been ruined and their whole development arrested by the overwork of their early years.

POVERTY AND KNOWLEDGE.

One of the most significant signs of the times is the change which, slowly as yet, but surely, is coming over public opinion in regard to what constitutes "education" for the working-class. The old idea that boys and girls ought not to be educated above their station, that there was an element of the miraculous in a carpenter who studied philosophy, and something positively indecent in a housemaid who wanted to play the piano, still struggles hard. But the demand of the people for knowledge and beauty is growing apace, and it is the feeling behind that demand which adds bitterness to the struggle in thousands of homes for bread and health for the children. The poor are as well aware as the rich that "knowledge is power," and they are aware also that knowledge, if it does not mean happiness, at least means the opportunity of a deeper and richer life. They will refuse to be persuaded that a cinematograph show and a halfpenny illustrated paper are all that they require in the way of drama, literature and art. They recognise that they have not had all the education they can profit by at the age of 14 (or 13 if—oh! irony of it—they have been clever or punctual enough to exempt themselves by then). They will even refuse—and rightly refuse —an improved "technical education," which implies that a workman's ideal is to be merely a skilled workman, and that a knowledge of anything beyond his trade is waste. At the present time the vast majority of the children of the nation are denied the opportunities of a liberal education, of realising the best that is in them. Large numbers, through the hunger and disease bred of poverty, through the strain of early and late hours in the streets and the shops and the mills, are deprived even of the chance of making the best of such education as is provided for them. And the ignorance which is produced by hunger and disease and overwork, will in its turn condemn them to more hunger and disease and overwork; for out of their ranks will come the inefficients of industry, the victims of "blind alley" jobs, the juvenile

criminals, the sweated workers, the inmates of our workhouses and infirmaries and asylums.

CHILDREN UNDER THE POOR LAW.

There are **under the Poor Law Authorities of the United Kingdom about 300,000 children,** the great bulk of them being between the ages of 5 and 16, and the rest infants under 5. These child paupers are dealt with in various ways by the Guardians. A large number of them are maintained in the general wards of the mixed Workhouse, subject to all the demoralisation that life in such an atmosphere is bound to produce. Public opinion has declared itself strongly against such a method of treatment, and the Local Government Boards of England, Scotland, and Ireland, have for some years been urging the removal of children from the Workhouses and Poorhouses. Despite this, however, there were on January 1st, 1912, in England and Wales, **no less than 8,600 children over 3 years of age still in the General Workhouse wards,** and some Boards of Guardians are either taking no notice of remonstrances, or openly defying the Local Government Board. The number represents, it is true, a decrease during the last three years; for when the Poor Law Commission reported, there were approximately 10,500. Mr. John Burns has described himself as "rapidly accelerating the removal of children from the workhouses," but his satisfaction at such a rate of reduction will hardly be shared by any but the very meanest of the ratepayers.*

About 18,000 children are "boarded out," not always under proper conditions. In one Cambridgeshire Union, for instance, the sum paid to the foster parents for a boarded-out child is, or was until recently, 2s. 6d. a week. According to the accepted standard, the minimum on which it is possible to maintain physical efficiency for a child must be put at 2s. 3d. per week for food alone. On that basis there is 3d. left for those foster parents to pay for clothing and other expenses connected with the child! The third method of maintaining pauper children is in separate institutions—Cottage or Scattered Homes. These are far preferable to the workhouse,

* In Ireland the figures are still worse. Last year there were actually 5,213 healthy children under 15 in the general workhouses, as against 2,623 boarded out and in certified schools.

and some of them are well equipped and comfortable; but they have their own disadvantages.*

But it is when we turn to the **Outdoor Relief children,** numbering nearly 200,000, that we find things at their worst. Tens of thousands of these, in the words of the Minority Report, are **"chronically underfed, insufficiently clothed, badly housed, and, in literally thousands of cases, actually being brought up at the public expense in drunken and dissolute homes."** Many Poor Law Authorities are giving utterly inadequate doles of relief for their outdoor children—often as little as 1s. 6d. or 1s. per week. In one benevolent Union, Hertford, the scale of out-relief, we learn from its Rules, is "*ninepence and five pounds of flour for each child not able to support himself or herself.*" It is not surprising to find that in London and many other towns there are numbers of pauper children, who, being unable to get sufficient food from what is allowed them out of the Poor rate, are given dinners at school out of the Education rate. Thus do ingenious ratepayers rob Peter to pay Paul!

But over and above the misery and disease which afflicts so great a proportion of the Poor Law children, there is the additional fact of their dishonour. Pauperism is a disgrace. It is the merest hypocrisy to pretend otherwise. The fact that a pauper may be fairly nourished and clothed does not remove the degradation of his pauperism, any more than to pamper a slave removes the essential degradation of slavery. No rich man would tolerate the thought of his child being brought up in a workhouse or a pauper school. Why should we tolerate it for a poor man's child?

THE NEW CHILDREN'S CHARTER.

Such a condition of things, then, is one which no nation that values its existence can afford to ignore. The sluggish public conscience must be pricked. We must shake that complacency with which we regard such niggardly measures as the Children Act of 1908. It may be desirable to increase the punishment for parental neglect, to urge children into the workhouse, to keep them from the blighting influence of the tobacconist and the publican; but it requires a vivid imagination to hail such a catalogue of pains and penalties as the

* See Minority Report of Poor Law Commission. Ch. IV.

Children's Charter! The new Children's Charter which we put forward demands *that every child shall have the right to be decently born, decently nurtured, and decently educated*, that we shall set up a standard of food, of health, of leisure, and of education, below which no child shall sink.

How is it to be done? The task is not a difficult one from the administrative standpoint. The machinery is ready to our hand, as the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission has already shown.

(1)—ABOLITION OF THE POOR LAW.

The first step must be the removal of all children out of the Poor Law. The Guardians in England and Wales and Ireland, and the Parish Councillors in Scotland, have proved themselves, as the Minority Commissioners reported, "inherently unfitted, by the very nature of their functions, to have the charge of the children for whom the State assumes the responsibility of a whole or partial maintenance." The high rate of infantile mortality among the destitute, the numbers of children in the general mixed Workhouses, the scandalous condition of the outdoor relief children, the educational defects of even the best administered of the institutional Schools and Homes, the unavoidable stigma of pauperism, the general wastefulness and overlapping, all these and many other inherent evils are an overwhelming condemnation of the Poor Law system. We demand, therefore, that **the whole of the public provision for birth and infancy should be transferred from the Poor Law to the local Health Authorities, and the whole of the public provision for children of school age to the local Education Authorities,** which have already, as the Minority Report reminds us, " in their directors of education and their extensive staff of teachers, their residential and their day feeding schools, their arrangements for medical inspection and treatment, their School Attendance Officers and Children's Care Committees, the machinery requisite for searching out every child destitute of the necessaries of life."

(2)—PROVISION FOR BIRTH AND INFANCY.

The great evils which threaten the children of the people at birth and during their earliest years are malnutrition and the overwork of the mothers. Many mothers can neither

feed their babies themselves, owing to their own physical weakness, nor get pure milk for the bottle. Many infants, too, are sacrificed to the ignorance of their mothers, an ignorance born of the miserable conditions of life prevailing among whole sections of the working class. A vast amount of mortality and disease, again, is caused by the necessity that drives tens of thousands of unhappy women to drudging in the home or going out to work up to a few days before and immediately after their confinement. To combat these evils must be the work of the Public Health Authorities. **Every local Authority must make adequate provision for the infants in its area, by maternity hospitals or midwives in the home, by ensuring a supply of pure milk (as is done at Liverpool, Glasgow, Finsbury, Battersea, etc.), by means of Baby Clinics and Schools for Mothers,* by giving advice and instruction through its Medical Officers and staff of Health Visitors, and where necessary, by the granting of a sufficient allowance to keep mothers from going out to work just before and just after their confinement.** The need for some measure of endowment of motherhood has been recognised by the Maternity benefit included in the National Insurance Act. But this benefit is by no means adequate, and its scope must be greatly enlarged if every child is to have the right to be well born.

Indeed, it will be necessary to look beyond the few weeks of confinement, and make such provision as will enable thousands of widows and deserted wives with young children dependent on them, to keep out of the industrial market altogether. The grant of an adequate allowance, as suggested by the Minority Report, to such mothers of young families, on condition of their exchanging industrial employment for the care of their children at home, would be an enormous boon to thousands of neglected children.

(3)—SCHOOL FEEDING.

The principle that the community is responsible for safeguarding the school children from hunger, without the stigma of pauperism, has already been placed on the Statute Book in

* Among the municipalities which run such institutions themselves, are Birmingham, Cardiff, Derby, Dundee, Glasgow, Sheffield, Lincoln. A number of others support voluntary institutions.

a rather half-hearted way by the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, and, as regards Scotland, in a more unqualified fashion by the Education (Scotland) Act, 1908, which *compels* a School Board to provide, not only food, but clothing, where necessary.

The scope of this Act of 1906 is narrow, and its administration very imperfect. It only empowers the local Education Authority to give meals, if they choose to do so, and many authorities, in their short-sighted anxiety to save the rates, have not adopted it.

It must be made compulsory. Moreover, it does not allow the provision of meals during school holidays, with the lamentable results that are only too apparent. It is imperative that **the meals should be provided irrespective of school days.** As regards the administration of the Act, we must see that every authority in the service of the meals comes at least up to Bradford's standard of efficiency and decency. It is important that **the educational value of the common meal should not be lost sight of.** Finally, there is the big question to be settled, whether the school dinner is to remain, as at present, a temporary palliative of destitution, or whether it is to hold a permanent place in the curriculum. The " selection " and feeding of " necessitous children " to-day is very unsatisfactory, and there is much to be said for the establishment of school dinners for all. The argument that such a provision would impair " family life " and the integrity of the home is absurd. The homes of the aristocracy have not been destroyed by the absence of their children at Eton or Harrow for three-quarters of the year. Why should the home life of the working class be impaired by their children eating their dinner with their school mates instead of with their mothers? It is true, as Miss MacMillan says, that " the advent of Socialism, of even a rudimentary order, must surely depend to some extent on the development of social feeling. That enlargement of the emotional life and imagination, which also makes possible a system of practical brotherhood (the giving and taking of service on equal terms, the concern and interest once confined to small family groups, radiating in widening circles . . . .), must depend not alone on a theory of life, but on constantly recurring occasions for the deepening and vivifying of mutual interest in larger groups and associations of persons, and above all on new opportunities

offered early in life for the social education of future citizens. The school meal offers such opportunities. The children who dine together come into new relations with one another. They come also into new relations with their teachers at table." But those opportunities are certainly not offered by a system of hastily cramming hundreds of ravenous children, selected on the basis of their parents' destitution, with bowls of indifferent soup, amid a scene of mess and uproar!

(4)—THE CHILDREN'S HEALTH.

The responsibility for the health of the school child, again, must rest mainly on the Education Authority. There are three necessary lines of action. We must have (1) a completely organised system of medical treatment, (2) healthy home conditions, (3) healthy conditions in the school (including more open-air schools for delicate and ailing children).

SCHOOL CLINICS.

The only sound method of medical treatment is the School Clinic. In London and other places the arrangements made by the Education Authority with the hospitals for treatment of the elementary school children have proved very unsatisfactory. In many districts—in fact, in the majority—nothing has been done at all in the way of treatment, except that the school medical officer advises the parents to take the child to a doctor and have it attended to. A great many parents doubtless do all they can, but many are neglectful, or unable through stress of poverty or otherwise to get the necessary treatment.*

It is now becoming more and more widely recognised that Bradford was right when it started its Clinic in 1908, and thus provided the model for scores of other towns, which during the last year or two have awakened to their responsibilities.

What are the advantages of the Clinic? It is a part of the school system, under the control of the Education Authority, uniting in its work school doctors and nurses

* The reports of School Medical Officers show this only too clearly. Thus, to take one instance out of many, the Medical Officer for Northampton says,—"the attitude of parents towards this trouble (teeth), seems to be one of complete apathy and ignorance . . . . . Very little good accrued from reporting ear troubles to parents, and the results of neglect were often serious in these cases, sometimes ending in death."

and dentists, teachers and Care Committees. It is able to give that detailed patient treatment for certain ailments which the hospitals generally cannot give. It provides, as no other method can, for the careful "following up" of cases (*e.g.*, breathing exercises, etc., after operations for adenoids). It is, by its very nature, the most completely "preventive" agency for dealing with disease in the school.

The expense is small. At Deptford, where Miss Margaret MacMillan and her friends have done such magnificent work, about 7,000 children were treated in twelve months, and the cost worked out at less than 3s. per head, as against 5s. 5d. paid by the L.C.C. under its contract with the Hospitals. It is safe to say that every shilling expended on the health of the child will mean the saving of a pound in years to come. For, as Sir George Newman says, "many of the diseases and physical disabilities of the adolescent and the adult spring directly out of the ailments of childhood. . . . As a general proposition it may be said that a State cannot effectually insure itself against physical disease unless it begins with its children." Nowhere can we find a better proof that prevention is cheaper than cure! Nor will the value of the Clinic be confined simply to its hospital work. It can encourage and teach many mothers (it is an astonishing error to suppose that the Clinic, to use the cant phrase, "impairs parental responsibility"); it can bring much happiness and knowledge as well as healing to the children. "The School Health Centre," says Miss MacMillan, "is an extension of the Home Nursery—no more and no less. As the school family is immense, however, and as its needs are various, the head of the School Nursery Clinic must be a doctor, and his assistant must be a trained hospital nurse (without ceasing to be a home nurse first and foremost). The school is not home. No, and yet it must supply something that will be found one day in every home. It must be built to supplement the poor shelters of to-day. . . . Bradford has a large and well appointed Clinic with a staff of three doctors, two nurses, and a dentist. The rooms—thirteen in number—are, or were, in the basement floor of the old Education Committee Office. There is a large waiting room, a nursery (where children can be attended to by the School Nurse), three doctor's rooms, a Röntgen Ray room (where children often sleep comfortably throughout the

whole treatment), two dentistries, and two very pleasant rooms where eyes, ears, etc., are examined. The whole has a very homely, cheery look, which is not at all like the atmosphere of the hospitals. The clinic has no associations of mystery, of dread, or even of pain. The children come and go happily, and—most noteworthy of all—many parents come here long before their children are really ill. This is held as the crowning glory of the place. It is claimed that thousands of mothers begin to learn the real meaning of *prevention*." Such a Clinic will be no mere palliative; it will play a prominent part among our municipal institutions. Of course, as poverty and its evil consequences are reduced, the work of the Clinic will necessarily contract. If, in years to come, the Clinic closes its doors because health reigns supreme in the school, a great victory will have been achieved. But our present task is to see that every local Education Authority has its own School Clinic.

HEALTHY HOMES.

Much of the good that is done in the Clinic or in school is unhappily undone in the child's home. Tens of thousands of families are living in foul slums, where cleanliness and light and good air are often a sheer impossibility. Damp, darkness, overcrowding,* and vermin, are all making the fight against disease more difficult and more costly. The slum landlord draws his rent, the poor suffer, and the public pays. The housing question is, of course, outside our province here; but it is a vital matter for the health of the children—the school children as well as the babies. **The Children's Charter will not be complete till the nation has ensured through Parliament and the local Authorities that every family has a healthy home.**

OPEN-AIR SCHOOLS.

The movement for Open-air Schools originated in 1904 at Charlottenburg, in Germany. Thence it has spread to England, and these schools have been established by a few Education Authorities, such as London, Bradford, Sheffield, Halifax,

* Dr. Leslie Mackenzie, reporting in 1907 on the Physical Condition of Children attending the Board Schools of Glasgow, showed that out of a total of 72,857 children, 5,922 or 8.1% were living in "one-roomed houses," and that the boys from these single rooms were on an average 11.7 lbs. lighter and 4.7 inches shorter than those from four-roomed houses, while the girls were 14 lbs. lighter and 5·3 inches shorter.

Norwich, Carlisle, Barnsley. At Charlottenburg the first year's working showed that, as regards the physical condition of the children, about 28 per cent. were cured and 40 per cent. greatly improved after three months. Educationally, it was found that, far from falling behind in their work, the children had kept pace with the ordinary school, and even beaten it as far as mental alertness, general intelligence, and initiative were concerned. Finally, from the point of view of discipline, the moral behaviour of the children had improved to a remarkable extent, owing to the manner in which they had been taught to observe the rules and regulations and perform the daily work of the little community of which they formed a part.

It is estimated that from 3 to 5 per cent. of all the school children in large towns are in such a condition, that, though able to attend school, they are not able to benefit properly by the instruction. Amongst these are many so-called "backward" children. These are not backward because of defective intelligence, but rather because of impaired vitality, due to defective frame, improper feeding, and unfavourable surroundings.

The lesson to be learned from this whole movement is the enormous value of healthy surroundings, not only to the weakly but to the normal child. For, as a great authority on this subject (Dr. Frederick Rose) has said, "the Open-air School contains all the possibilities which may be realised in some future day in the ideal school—open school buildings in rural surroundings, provided with the simplest but best hygienic and educational apparatus, small classes, short lessons, and the instruction brought into touch with actual conditions to such an extent that the children are interested in their work, and regard it as a pleasant occupation, and not as anything distasteful." If we had such an appreciation of the importance of environment as Plato showed 2,300 years ago, when he urged that the youth of the nation should "dwell in a land of health, amid fair sights and sounds, where beauty, that is born of fair works, will come upon their senses like a breeze, and insensibly draw the mind even in childhood into a love of the highest things," we should make short work of the thousands of schools buried in the fetid backways of our crowded cities. Doubtless we cannot yet bring that to pass. But we should do something towards it **if every citizen**

made it his business to see that where his local Education Authority was building a new school, that school should be built only on a fair and open site.

(5)—THE ABOLITION OF CHILD LABOUR.

If we are to secure for our children a happy childhood, in which rest, recreation, and school all have their proper part, we shall find there is no room for "employment out of school hours." That shameful thing, "the wage-earning child," must be abolished, whether his "wages" are gained in a cotton mill, in a shop, or in the streets. **The half-time system must be done away with, despite the opposition from the textile areas, and street trading must be prohibited for boys up to 17 and for girls up to 18,** in accordance with the recommendations of the Departmental Committee. For those two reforms Acts of Parliament are needed, especially since the local Authorities show a scandalous laxity in using the powers which they possess to regulate child labour. The Employment of Children Act, 1903, gives a local Authority the power, if it chooses, to prohibit absolutely all labour of children under 14 years, and to fix any age between 11 and 16, below which street trading is illegal. Yet there are over 26,000 children under 14 *actually licensed as street traders* in England and Wales, and a great army of lads working the clock round on vans, in shops, billiard saloons, etc., to whom the local Authority shuts its eyes!

(6)—EDUCATIONAL REFORMS.

What is the minimum of education in the narrower sense that we must claim as the right of every child? At present it stands for the vast majority at nine years of pretty strenuous schooling. During these years—from 5 to 14—the attempt is made to impart a good deal more information than most of the scholars can assimilate in the time, while a good deal that ought to be taught is left out. But the demand is growing steadily for the **raising of the school age to 15 or 16, and it is certain that such a step is vitally necessary for the progress of the nation.** The objection that a poor man cannot afford to keep his children at school after 14 must be met in general by the ensuring of decent wages to every father of a family, and, in cases of particular hardship, by some form of maintenance grant from the Education Authority. In any event, it

is a discreditable thing that the governing classes, who would be scandalised at the idea of being supported by their own sons and daughters at the age of 14, should proclaim it as a duty in the working class.

This is not the place to discuss reforms within the school itself. Suffice it to say that there is urgent need of changes in the curriculum, of reductions in the size of classes, and so on. But the worker's education ought not to stop even at 15. **A national system of Continuation Classes** is wanted—not night schools for young people wearied with a long day's labour, but day classes organised in such a way that the boys and girls shall divide their time equally between their industrial employment and their education—a half-time system, in fact, as suggested by the Minority Report, the young person under 18 being employed for twenty-four hours a week, and attending for another twenty-four hours at a Trade School or Continuation Class. Last, but not least, **the number of scholarships which will enable children to pass from the elementary to the secondary schools, and to the University, must be largely increased.** A democracy that denies "higher education" to five-sixths of its citizens is not only robbing the people of their birthright, but is preparing confusion and disaster for itself.

THE NEW CHARTER OF THE CHILDREN.

Here, then, are the six points of our Charter:—

(1) The removal of all children from the Poor Law.

(2) The securing through the Public Health Authorities of a fitting nurture for all infants under school age.

(3) The securing through the Education Authorities of adequate food for all children of school age.

(4) The prevention and cure of disease in the school children by the Education Authorities by means of School Clinics, Open-Air Schools, etc.

(5) The prevention of child labour by amendment of the Factory Acts, prohibition of Street Trading, etc.

(6) The better education of the children by the raising of the school age, the establishment of day Continuation Classes, and the increase of facilities for Higher Education.

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